the sub-continent, Government has announced a series of measures. These include: (i) India will observe a voluntary moratorium and refrain from conducting further tests. India is also willing to explore ways and means, in moving towards a de jure formalisation of this declaration, (ii) India is ready to discuss a no-first-use agreement bilaterally with Pakistan, as also with other countries, bilaterally or in a collective forum, (iii) India has made clear its readiness to engage in multilateral negotiations on a Fissile Materials Cut-Off- Treaty in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, and (iv) India has no intention of engaging in a nuclear arms race.

Bodies of Indians Dying in Gulf Countries

2499. SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER of be pleased to state:

(a) what steps Government propose to take to bring back to India the bodies of Indians, dying in Gulf countries, as the disposal of non-Muslims are not allowed in some of those countries; and:

(b) whether Government would consider making some arrangements in this regard to help the relatives of the deceased taking into account the considerable delay in getting the dead bodies?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) as per the practice prevalent in the Gulf countries, the bodies of deceased Indian nationals are transported to India at the expense of the foreign employers/ sponsors as per the obligations stipulated in their employment contracts. This arrangement has been found to be working satisfactorily.

(b) The delay in transporting the dead bodies to India is attributed to the requirement to comply with stringent local procedures. In cases of natural death, the repatriation of the body of the deceased person could take upto six weeks. In cases of accidents, suicides, murders etc., the delay could be much longer, since police investigation by the local authorities is a prerequisite and, until this is completed, other formalities such as the local District Governor's clearance, attestation of relevant documents etc., cannot be undertaken. On receipt of information regarding the death of Indian nationals, the Indian diplomatic Missions/Posts in the Gulf countries liaise with the family members and employers/sponsors to facilitate expeditious procedural clearances and repatriation of India of the mortal remains of the deceased.

U.S. Firm's Help For Nuclear Facility

2500. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned "US firm's help for Pak N-facility irks India" as reported in the Statesman dated the 4th May, 1998;

(b) if so, whether Government are aware that a US firm has been actively helping Pakistan to develop new nuclear weapon testing facility; and

(c) if so, the reaction of Government to such deals?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) yes, Sir.

(b) Government had clarified in a statement on the subject that India has continuously monitored trends, acquisitions and developments in nuclear and missile related activity by countries in our region. It has been India's assessment that Pakistan's pursuit of its clandestine nuclear weapons and missile programme continues unabated despite the declared efforts of many countries.

(c) Our concerns regarding these reports have been conveyed to the Government of the United States.